

**EXETER-WEST GREENWICH
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

March 27, 2012

MINUTES

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee held a meeting on this date at 6:00 p.m. in the Metcalf Elementary School Cafeteria. Members present were Teri Maia-Cicero, Chair; Mark Rafanelli, Vice-Chair; Valerie Zuercher, Clerk, (left the meeting at 9:00 p.m.); Theresa Donovan, Paul McFadden, Lee Kissinger, and Claudine Pande. Others present: Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar, Director of Administration Robert V. Ross, Student Member Angela Russo

ORDER – Chair Cicero called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and Clerk Zuercher read the District Mission Statement.

Open Forum – Vice Chair Rafanelli said that he had the pleasure of attending the Rhode Island Interscholastic coaches' awards dinner on Sunday. Once again, EWG Sr. High was represented extremely well with four young ladies receiving individual awards. Jackelyn Harrington received First Team-Division I, Kate McElroy and Kathleen Rafanelli received Second Team-Division I, and sophomore Taylor Buckley received honorable mention. Moreover, the team was awarded the Championship Tournament Sportsmanship Award and Steve McGrane was named Division I Coach of the Year!

Recognitions/Achievements – Restaurant Essay Winners – This recognition will continue to the next regular meeting agenda.

Spelling Bee First and Second Place Winners – This item will continue to the next regular meeting agenda.

Poetry Out Loud State Finals – Qualifier – Dr. Geismar, Mrs. Sutton, and Principal Butler joined in honoring sophomore Alexandra Fortin who recently participated in the Poetry Out Loud - National Recitation Contest. Principal Butler praised Alex for her accomplishment and said that out of 1,500 entrees statewide, she placed 4th! Alexandra was introduced to present one of her pieces, *The Albatross Poem, By Kate Bass*. Representing the School Committee, Chair Cicero congratulated Alexandra and presented her with a School Committee Recognition Award and gift card.

PRESENTATION – Student Member Report – Student Member Angela Russo reported that the EWG Cheerleaders placed 3rd at the State Cheerleading Competition and placed 1st at the District Competition. Christian and Andrew LaBrie placed 3rd in the New England High School Wrestling Championship Tournament. Carl Neff, Christian and Andrew LaBrie, and Joe Ricciutti placed in the top five for the state. This Friday, VAASA students will attend a statewide training to learn ways to share substance-free messages with their peers. The End of the Winter Band Concert is at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday and will take place in the high school auditorium. Lastly, the class of 2013 submitted their subject topic selections for next year's senior project. Most of the

students said that they liked the early start. However, some students said that they wished they had more time to think about it because many felt not ready to decide. Student Member Russo recommended giving juniors early notice next year that they will be asked to decide at the end of the year. Let students know that they need to seriously begin thinking about what they want to do at the beginning to middle of their junior year.

Metcalf School Presentation – Principal Mary Lou Almonte gave a brief indication of the 2011 – 2012 NECAP test results data enclosed in members' packets. Next, she reported that tonight's presentation will include a report on the school improvement initiatives in place at Metcalf School. The school improvement plan was divided into Focus Groups. Mrs. Almonte introduced each Focus Group teacher representative to briefly summarize the efforts and accomplishments of their respective area of the Focus Group. Teacher representatives were Gina Kilday – Mathematics; Brad Levett – Science; Melissa Cohen and Deb Blake – ELA/Reading Street Program; Terry Packer – Technology; Sharon LaFrenaye – Family Engagement; Assistant Principal Carol Fish – Climate/Culture; School Nurse Teacher Christine McGrane – Health & Safety. Lastly, Principal Almonte reviewed Recognition of Achievement and Assistant Principal Fish reviewed Title Programs at EWG. Dr. Geismar thanked Mrs. Almonte, Mrs. Fish, and each of the focus group leaders for the work that they each do.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA- Superintendent Geismar gave an overview of the Consent Agenda. He referenced item B. 2. a. and said that Mrs. Blake has been on a leave of absence from her .5 Reading Specialist position for this year. He is recommending extending her leave for next year because the contract requires that LOAs be granted one year at a time. Mrs. Blake has a contract with EWG as a *.5 Reading Supervisor*, however; it is in her best interest to grant her the leave from her Reading Specialist position.

Chair Cicero asked for clarification, pointing out that Mrs. Blake's letter requests a 2-year LOA and the position she currently holds as a .5 Reading Supervisor includes a 3-year plan. Dr. Geismar reiterated that he recommends a one-year LOA as it is customary to grant LOAs one year at a time and not for multiple years. Chair Cicero expressed her opinion that this LOA falls under different circumstance since Mrs. Blake is staying within the organization. She requested to pull this item for further discussion of the 2-year vs. 1-year LOA.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to accept the consent agenda, minus item B. 2. a.; Member Kissinger seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

The following items were approved:

- A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Minutes of March 13, 2012; Executive Session Minutes of March 13, 2012**
- B. Personnel Items**
 - 1. Appointments**
 - 2. Leaves of Absence**
 - a. Item Pulled*
 - 3. Resignations – (As Recommended by the Superintendent, with Regret)**
 - a. Letter of Resignation from Carol Belanger resigning her position as 1.0 FTE Teacher Assistant at Lineham School, for the purpose of Retirement, effective March 1, 2012**
 - b. Supplemental Letter of Resignation from Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar requesting that his date of retirement be on or about July 15, 2012 with the understanding that should his services be needed after July 15 a date can be determined to ensure a smooth transition**
 - 4. Grievances**
 - 5. Non-Renewals**
 - 6. Recalls**
 - 7. Sabbaticals**
- C. Bills – In the amount of \$449,333.14**
- D. Home School Approval**
- End Consent Agenda**

Correspondence – (1) Smithfield Public Schools School Committee Resolution (Layoff Notification Date) passed on March 19, 2012; (2) Metcalf School Feinstein Leadership Newsletter February 2012; (3) Senior High School SIT Meeting Minutes of March 8, 2012; (4) Review of Object Code 52000 and 55000 Variance of Budget to Projected; (5) Metcalf Elementary School SIT Meeting Minutes of March 8, 2012

2012 – 2013 Budget – Dr. Geismar said that he brought copies of the all-day referendum communication plan that the public relations subcommittee crafted. His office has been implementing the plan as it is written.

Member McFadden requested an update on the latest student enrollment counts that were sent to both towns. Mr. Ross said he believed that at the last School Committee meeting, the number that was presented is still the one accepted by the school board and that no

action has been taken other than what was presented. Member McFadden said that Exeter does not have the reserve fund that West Greenwich does to make up any disputes with the student enrollment number. Exeter's budget discussions are well underway so they really need to know what the chargebacks from the schools to the town will be in order to meet their budget timeline. Mr. Ross said he would need clarification then, for the record, from the school committee to say that the October 1 report submitted to the state will be amended to reflect the counts as verified by the towns. Chair Cicero asked first for a report on any feedback received on the last list that was given to the towns. Mr. Ross said that he has not heard back from Exeter. West Greenwich was given a list with 1,011 students, which was one more than the initial 1,010 count. West Greenwich confirmed that there were two addresses they believed to be Exeter addresses. The District reviewed and verified that those addresses in fact did belong to Exeter. So while the state and budget reports reflect 1,010 students for West Greenwich, with the latest verification, that number would change to 1,009, for a decrease of one. Mr. Ross reiterated that the district has not heard from Exeter yet. He cautiously speculated that Exeter has not responded because it is sitting pat with the 824 student count as shown on the state report and on the school district report.

A lengthy discussion ensued and members expressed concerns that each of the towns would need adequate time to construct their budgets, whether Exeter understands the ramifications of not rectifying the new list, and whether the School Committee should correct mistake(s). Vice Chair Rafanelli recommended and the committee agreed to place the October 1 Enrollment item on the April 9 Special Meeting agenda for follow up. Mr. Ross asked the committee for specific instructions on how to proceed. The Committee directed Mr. Ross as follows:

- Communicate to both towns tomorrow
- Notify Exeter that the School Committee sent this request
- Notify Exeter that the numbers need to be rectified
- Notify Exeter of the deadline to reply
- Notify Exeter of the ramifications of not rectifying the list
- Notify Exeter to reply if it finds a dispute
- Share with Exeter that West Greenwich has one student on its list that appears to be an Exeter student
- Convey clearly to Exeter that it is in their interest to review that list and communicate back any changes to the School Committee
- Ask for confirmation in return

Member Kissinger expressed his opinion that if the School Committee corrects the mistake, it would do so just for this year, be done with it, and make sure it does not happen again next year.

Mr. Ross summarized that the committee's directions are to take the numbers, share with each town the concerns, do a new calculation, and inform the two towns of their new apportionment. The School Committee concurred.

Member Kissinger added:

- Inform both towns that the School Committee will provide enrollment numbers on April 10

NEW BUSINESS – Approve High School Writing Textbook – Dr. Geismar introduced English Department Chair Sharon Sutton. Mrs. Sutton is requesting School Committee approval of a required writing textbook to support a course that EWG students can take beginning next year for both high school credit and college credit through URI. Mrs. Sutton answered members' clarifying questions. She verified that the textbook purchase would come out of the English Department budget.

Member Kissinger moved to approve the high school writing textbook; seconded by Member Pande; and voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Member McFadden made a motion to move item, **Coaches Fitness Training Proposal** up on the agenda; seconded by Member Donovan; and voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Coaches Fitness Training Proposal – Dr. Geismar introduced Christina Savoie, Fitness Director for the Naval Station in Newport. Mrs. Savoie presented a proposal to run coaches' fitness-training workshops at EWG and establish procedures that can be used for *all* sports that will minimize the risk of injuries to student athletes. She said that her proposed workshops cost in total \$1,050.00 per year. Mrs. Savoie answered members' clarifying questions.

Clerk Zuercher moved to approve the Coaches Fitness Training Proposal; seconded by Member Kissinger; and voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Chair Cicero requested and the committee agreed to discuss the **Leave of Absence** that was pulled from the **consent agenda** at this time.

Chair Cicero pointed out that Mrs. Blake's enclosed letter asks for a two-year leave of absence because when she was hired as *Reading Specialist*, the vision was that the work would take at least three years to complete. Typically, LOAs are granted one year at a time for individuals to work outside of the district. These circumstances are different since Mrs. Blake is staying within the organization. Chair Cicero said that she is uncomfortable granting an LOA for only one-year at a time. Since the Reading Specialist position is identified as a three-year position, the committee should grant a two-year extension now.

A lengthy discussion ensued and members debated a one-year LOA vs. a two-year LOA. Some members expressed concerns about setting precedence, while others were of the opinion that the LOA and Reading Specialist contract should mirror one another. Members asked clarifying questions. Chair Cicero explained that initially Mrs. Blake requested a three-year LOA to coincide with her three-year contract as Reading Supervisor. However, the School Committee unconsciously granted a one-year LOA at that time.

Vice Chair Rafanelli moved to accept this letter for a two-year leave of absence; seconded by Member Donovan

Member Pande questioned if language could be added to the motion to have it mirror the administrative contract.

Vice Chair Rafanelli moved to grant a two-year leave of absence to align with the three-year commitment as contracted; Donovan seconded.

Member Donovan expressed her view that when EWG has this level of talent in district and the district has already demonstrated a level of investment in this employee, to then have the alternative of going outside of the district to hire someone else in a short-term contract is a disservice to the district. This is a unique set of circumstances with this position for this program. Member Donovan said that she supports the motion.

The motion was reviewed.
Vote 7 – 0 in favor

The following item was approved:

- 1. Leaves of Absence– (As Recommended by the Superintendent)**
 - c. Debra Blake request to continue her leave of absence for 2012 – 2014, from her .5 FTE Grade 2 Reading Specialist position at Wawaloam School, in order to continue her commitment as Reading Supervisor**

Recycling Discussion – Clerk Zuercher asked Mr. Ross to obtain prices for her. This item will continue to the next regular meeting agenda.

Substitutes – Dr. Geismar said that Member Pande requested this agenda item. The district has many wonderful substitute teachers and some substitutes have had to be excluded. He briefly explained how a substitute's performance is measured and talked about incentives to attract retired EWG teachers as substitutes.

Member Pande said that she brought this item forward because more and more she hears negative feedback from students and parents about substitute teachers. She offered a list of ways to improve the substitute teacher pool.

- Set protocol for substitute teachers
- Require references from teachers and other schools
- Principal visits to classroom on the first day of substitute teaching
- Request feedback from students and classroom teacher
- Attract quality subs by establishing relations with RI College and URI
- Determine how to maintain quality subs
- Review the pay rate
- Have the substitute coordinator place calls to quality subs rather than acquiring subs through the AESOP system
- Maintain consistency in classroom if a teacher will be out more than two consecutive days

Dr. Geismar said that at the last admin meeting, discussion took place regarding substitute teachers. He would take Member Pande's comments and concerns back to the administrators for review and bring back a plan within the next two meetings illustrating what will be done to have quality substitutes. Member Pande communicated that she would be okay if those ideas have a fiscal impact because this is an important issue.

Approve Math Coach Job Description – Dr. Geismar requested the School Committee approve the proposed Math Coach Job Description as presented. The math coach will provide professional development for teachers in grades K-6 and coaching in the classroom. This is to keep the teacher in the classroom. This position will provide support to teachers in transitioning to the Common Core State Standards. This would be a permanent position that would be funded annually through the federal ESEA grant. If the grant was discontinued, an alternate funding source would be explored or the position would terminate.

Member Pande requested to add language to the job description that this person must work with junior high team leaders and/or math teachers for alignment of curriculum and transition from the Everyday Math program to the junior high math program. Dr. Geismar agreed. The committee reached consensus to have the job description read K – 8. In response to Member McFadden's inquiry, Dr. Geismar said that this would not be an administrative position. A discussion ensued regarding fiscal impact for this position.

Clerk Zuercher left the meeting at this time, (9:00 p.m.).

Member McFadden proposed making this an administrative position to open up the pool of candidates. Dr. Geismar said that math coaches are appropriate as a teaching position and expressed uncertainty if an administrative math coach certificate exists. Principal Almonte advised that she recently learned that math supervisor certification is imminent but would not be available until 2014. Dr. Geismar will bring back the Math Coach Job Description, with modifications to the next regular meeting for approval.

Approve High School Program of Studies 2012 – 2013 – Principal Brian Butler requested School Committee approval of the High School Program of Studies for the 2012 – 2013 school year. Members asked clarifying questions. Members briefly discussed the math programs at the junior and senior high schools. Member Pande asked to research offering Algebra I to every student in the 8th grade.

Vice Chair Rafanelli moved to accept the High School Program of Studies [2012-2013]; seconded by Member Donovan; and voted 6 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Superintendent Search – Chair Cicero requested to keep this item on every meeting agenda until the position is filled. She said that the questionnaire was sent out today to all parents and employees. NESDEC will collect the data and send it to her. The brochure was completed and sent to NESDEC last night. Members Pande and Donovan assisted her in accomplishing that task. The advertisement was sent to NESDEC Sunday evening. NESDEC will be sending a new contract for signature.

Chair Cicero reviewed upcoming important dates and meeting:

- April 4 - Questionnaire deadline
- April 5 - Put packets together
- April 9 - All Day Referendum Special Meeting - *Add Oct 1 Enrollment to agenda*
- April 10- Select search committee and Share questionnaire with School Committee
- April 24- Lite regular School Committee Meeting from 6:00 – 7:00 pm
- April 24- Special Meeting – NESDEC at 7:00 pm - *Superintendent profile that night and Entire search committee will attend*
- May 17- Special Meeting – NESDEC at 7:00 pm - *Screening committee to receive interview packets of all candidates*
- May 22- Lite regular School Committee Meeting from 6:00 to 6:30 pm
- May 22- Special Meeting – NESDEC at 6:30 pm - *Select candidates to interview*

Chair Cicero presumed that interviews would most likely take place on Saturday, June 2. She advised members to keep their calendars free for the weekend of June 2 and June 3.

Capital Project Update – Mr. Ross reported that the Building Committee met last Wednesday. EWG has settled with Gilbane. ATC has provided a quote for the IT air makeup work. The Building Committee is also considering other quotes. A balance of over \$100,000 remains in the bond fund. Torrado Architect will put together a bid for the admin parking overflow project near the IT department area. Mr. Ross said he will meet with RIDE on April 4 at 10:00 am to review wind project down and address Capital Asset Protection Plan going forward under the new regulations.

Reports/Comments – Chair Cicero requested to also add NESDEC – Superintendent Search to the April 9 Special Meeting agenda.

Important Dates and Meetings –Monday, April 9, 2012-All Day Referendum AND Special School Committee Meeting at 8:30 PM; Tuesday, April 10, 2012-School Committee Meeting (*Sr. High School Presentation*); Tuesday, April 24, 2012-School Committee Meeting (*Jr. High School Presentation*)

EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5 – Vice Chair Rafanelli moved to go into Executive Session at 9:37 p.m. in accordance with 42-46-5 (a)(1) – Personnel; seconded by Member Donovan; and voted as follows:

Teri Cicero	Yes
Mark Rafanelli	Yes
Lee Kissinger	Yes
Theresa Donovan	Yes
Paul McFadden	Yes
Claudine Pande	Yes

Superintendent Geismar left the meeting at this time, (9:37 p.m.).

Meeting recessed to Executive Session at 9:40 p.m.

Vice Chair Rafanelli moved to reconvene to Open Session. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 0 in favor.

Meeting reconvened to Open Session at 10:15 p.m.

There were no votes taken during Executive Session.

Adjournment – Vice Chair Rafanelli moved to adjourn; Member Donovan seconded the motion; and voted 6 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

ROBIN CERIO
CLERK